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## Foreword

*Dear Colleagues,*

registration forms for our next, our 10<sup>th</sup> World Teachers' Conference (WTC), are now arriving on our desks. We are delighted with your interest in this conference which bears the title:

**Overcoming Resistance:  
Courage for an Independent Spiritual Life**

You should by now have received all the relevant posters or flyers. More information is available on our website

*[www.paedagogik-goetheanum.ch](http://www.paedagogik-goetheanum.ch)*

Two more articles preparing us for the conference are included in this edition of the journal.

Florian Osswald has gone for a treasure hunt in his contribution, and Tomáš Zdražil traces the courage we need for our work. Do we place our complete trust in the spiritual world and allow ourselves to be provided with the courage we need to work on this basis? Are we brave enough to work on a variety of tasks but also take up the challenge of something new? Do we approach our practical work in the classroom with enough courage? Are we able to rely on our pedagogy and take steps to explore it further and transform it with courage, or are we easily intimidated by external influences?

The schools in North America are free to teach their curriculum without interference from the state while on the other hand not receiving any financial support from public funding. Our colleagues in America approach their tasks with a great deal of trust and commitment.

Melanie Reiser of the Association of Waldorf Schools in North America (AWSNA) gives us an update on the school movement there. During an extended visit to the USA in November, the International Forum (formerly the Hague Circle) gained many impressions in the schools. You will find several reports in this journal of those visits, of the schools, the classrooms, of meetings with pupils and of conversations with colleagues and parents. Regula Nilo from Sweden, Tracey Sayn Wittgenstein Piraccini from Australia, Ellen Fjeld Køttker from Norway and James Pewtherer from the USA offer us an insight into all of these aspects.

Nana Goebel and Robert Thomas also share their impressions and in addition give a short report of the meeting of the International Forum in Orange County, south of Los Angeles (California). They refer to the topics with which we are currently involved. We will continue our work with these at our next meeting in May 2016.

We are very grateful to have had this opportunity in North America. We were privileged to experience a great multitude of things and at the same time to feel so very much at home in the Waldorf or Rudolf Steiner Schools. We would like to say a warm thank you once again to all those who contributed to this experience!!!

Thank you to all our readers for all your support for our work in the Pedagogical Section. From our hearts we wish you a blessed and peaceful Christmas season and a good start to the New Year!

*The Pedagogical Section*

## Courage for an Independent Spiritual Life or: How do we find the treasure?

*Florian Osswald*

*Translated by Karin Smith*

Rudolf Steiner's educational impulse is an attempt to create a kind of education which is strictly oriented to the child and which enables the child to develop a "loving autonomy".

Children are not fixed in their ways. We immediately recognize their childlike conduct: they are open-minded towards the world, their experience is fresh, they forgive us, they learn amazingly fast, have intuition and astonishing stamina and are interested in everything. Adults have to muster the courage not to obliterate the children's freshness, their openness and their intensive interest. We must allow the "childhood forces" to remain active into adulthood and old age. As Steiner put it:

*But you will say: We cannot make every aspect of the spiritual life dependent upon children. Spiritual talents, spiritual capacity and spiritual activity must be something that goes beyond the time of childhood and adolescence. In general, however, this is not so, as paradoxical as it may sound. Because any capacities we may have that go beyond the average and that have stayed with us past our twenties, are based on what we have preserved from childhood as spiritual talents. This is what spiritual research reveals again and again. The greatest geniuses are precisely those who carry the powers of earliest childhood into their thirties, forties and fifties. As they get older, they practice*

*these powers of childhood but with a mature soul, a mature spirituality -- but they are still the powers of childhood. Unfortunately, our culture has the distinction of killing off as much as possible of these childhood forces through upbringing and education ...<sup>1</sup>*

Here, Steiner talks about the „childhood forces“, or „what we have preserved from childhood as spiritual talents ...“. He does not refer to talents based on genes or milieu but to what the child has carried over, as it were, from the spiritual world. For Steiner, the child is not a tabula rasa because every child carries within herself the "treasure of childhood". With that we don't only mean extraordinary talents but also the child's idiosyncrasies such as the way she plays, how she moves, her particular imagination or how she expresses herself.

### The Age of Prevention

Steiner warns us not to „kill off“ the powers of childhood. How does this happen nowadays? We have developed methods for "efficient" learning. Many educational programs aim to boost numeracy, literacy and second languages as early as possible, without taking the child's developmental stage into consideration. Children play in standardised playgrounds which do not allow any real room for play in its true meaning. They spend long hours sitting down at desks and are put through academic drills at extra tuition cen-

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1 Rudolf Steiner in a lecture on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1920. Published in German in: Soziale Ideen – Soziale Wirklichkeit – Soziale Praxis. GA 337a. No English translation available.

tres. Parents worry that their child might not pass the required exams and will "fall behind". They believe that a successful future is based on passing exams and they act accordingly.

All this leads to a withdrawal of the childhood forces. Boredom is banned. Children are prevented from day dreaming or from aimless play. They are no longer allowed to try out crazy ideas or to make mistakes. They are prohibited from running wild, bruise their knees and get dirty. Thus, their voices are silenced, the treasure remains hidden, the power of childhood is wasted.

However, if the treasure is allowed to unfold in a healthy, unconstrained childhood, its light becomes visible ...

**... because the treasure shines**

Treasures fascinate us, their visible magic is mesmerizing. Marianne Williamson talks about it in "A Return to Love"; Nelson Mandela quoted her in his 1994 inauguration speech in Pretoria/Tshwane.

*Our deepest fear is not  
that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is  
that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness  
that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant,  
gorgeous, talented, fabulous?  
Actually, who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God.  
Your playing small does not serve the world.  
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking  
so that other people won't feel insecure  
around you.  
We are all meant to shine, as children do.  
We were born to make manifest  
the glory of God that is within us.  
It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone.*

*And as we let our own light shine,  
we unconsciously  
give other people permission to do the same.  
As we are liberated from our own fear,  
our presence automatically liberates others.*

One of the keys to a deeper understanding of Williamson's words is to be found in the line "Your playing small does not serve the world". We, the adults, belittle the child if we do not grant her the room she needs for her growth and development. And so she will be playing small when she herself has become a grownup.

**A light in our society**

Further, it becomes clear that the treasure's light is very much needed by our fellow human beings, by society as a whole. Radiant people inspire others and are able to live their lives in new, creative ways. And what is more, I truly believe that young people – if they were allowed to experience a healthy childhood – will find new, unprecedented solutions for today's difficulties. Mankind is stuck in many ways: the burning up of fossil fuels and the unregulated economic growth, to name but two. Young people must be given a chance to contribute their ideas to the world. Society needs fresh, new vigour to solve urgent global issues.

However, we are in real danger to remain stuck in the status quo. In education, we may avert this danger by an intensive study of childhood, because the childhood forces need to be discovered again and again. They are generally known and listed in books on child development. But if we want to perceive the exact way they manifest themselves in the individual, we need to observe children carefully and be open to expect something new in every child.

This means that the adult has to awaken the child within himself, based on some inner

change. For example, if I want to closely study someone else's gait, if I want to imitate his way of walking, then I need to forget my own way of walking for a moment and I have to immerse myself into the other person's walk. This is the moment when some inner change happens. And the child shows us the most extraordinary ability for change! The fresh wind of transformation – and the child is visible transformation – touches us. This, together with our openness and a deep interest in the world are the foundations for the following three tasks.

### **The educators three tasks**

The first task is to inspire the confidence in the children and adolescents to know for certain that in each one of them lives a treasure which only they can discover. The people around us only assist in the process, like midwives do.

The second task is to help the powers of imagination to develop. This can be practised in all forms of artistic activities. Children live very much out of the powers of imagination and grownups have the possibility to rejuvenate these forces within themselves.

Finally, the third task is to bring the world closer to the children and teens. This has to happen on all levels, not just in theory. Steiner said that all teaching should essentially be a teaching of life skills. From kindergarten to high school: Teaching must lead the learner right into reality.

If we face these three tasks and create the proper teaching environment for the children and teenagers, then we enable them to develop a „loving autonomy“. This is where the seed to an independent spiritual life is to be found.



## Forces of courage and Waldorf education

Thoughts on the subject of the World Teachers' Conference 2016

*Tomáš Zdražil*

*translated by Christian von Arnim*

*"The only thing that matters is courage. Even the bravest person sometimes loses it and then we tend to search for programmes, security and guarantees. Courage requires reason but it is not a child of reason, it comes from deeper layers." Hermann Hesse*

### **Courage as metamorphosis of the will**

The human will is the most mysterious soul force. It comes to expression in that it overcomes resistance. If we look at a very elementary expression of the will – holding an object – we can study this characteristic. When we hold a bag or another object we can only do so because the action of the will is constantly reactivated in the fingers, the hand and the arm. We continually have to apply the will in the face of gravity in order to avoid flagging.

The will arises out of itself anew at every moment, it is thus highly creative. That is different from when we create a mental image or have a feeling. Our mental images factually depict the external environment. The feelings have a very personal, but also reactive character. The will is active and the most inward and individual one of all the regions of the soul. Here people are themselves to the greatest extent. The whole character of a person is connected with this most inward and individual region of their soul, their will.

If the will grows stronger and is also permeated by spiritual impulses, it comes to expression in our moral character as industriousness, diligence, perseverance, helpfulness

or also as courage. Courage is a particular characteristic of spiritualised will and shows how people cope with opposition and overcome it, how they deal with risky situations fraught with uncertainties and trouble. Or alternatively courage can also enable a person to resist doing something (what might be expected of them), to hold back and refuse to perform an action. Courage is individual to the highest degree and connected with conscience and a sense of responsibility; it is also closely connected with initiative.

### **Courage at the start of the modern era**

At the foundation of the Waldorf school, Rudolf Steiner spoke about the inner, concealed connection between the emergence of the modern era and Waldorf education (Steiner GA 293, p. 19). The same forces were at work in the "spiritual substrates" of both events. Put in somewhat abstract and rough terms, we might say that they were characterised by individualisation. A key aspect here is the soul and spiritual forces of courage. They are a signature of the modern person in the modern age who takes a stand on a matter they have recognised as right and important in the face of opposition and danger. We will illustrate this with three examples from the first centuries of the modern era in Europe.

One of the first representatives of such an inner attitude is the Czech theologian and reformer **Jan Hus** (1369-1415). Hus advocated the view that every person should seek and develop their own personal relationship

with God; the Church and the Pope were not essential as intermediaries in his view. His courage is based on the unwavering conviction that what guides every person is the inwardly struggled for and recognised "truth". Facing a church council, the indisputable authority until then, he demanded reasons why he should correct his findings and rejected blind subordination. In prison in Constance, he wrote in a letter in 1415: "*Hence, dear Christian, seek the truth, hear the truth, learn the truth, love the truth, speak the truth, hold fast to truth, defend truth to the death ...*" and was ultimately prepared to sacrifice his life rather than recant something of which he was profoundly convinced.

A similar model at the start of the modern era is the figure of **Christopher Columbus** (1451-1506). With a great deal of effort he worked out for himself and became convinced that there had to be a western route to Asia. But this entailed taking leave of land and the associated feeling of security. Surrounded only by water without any fixed outer reference point, the inner security he had obtained enabled him to keep going over many weeks and reach his destination. His courage consisted of letting go of outer security and trusting only in the firm insight he had won.

The great Italian polymath and contemporary of Columbus **Giovanni Pico della Mirandola** (1463-1494) courageously wrote, contrary to the ruling view, in his text from 1486 about the dignity of the human being: "*... you are not inhibited by any kind of insurmountable barrier but you shall determine even your nature in accordance with your own will, in whose hand I have placed your fortune ...*" The nature of the human being is not to allow itself to be led by outer conditions but from within. Such an attitude of rejecting external rules and limits and de-

termining the measure of our actions from within requires enormous courage.

In the following centuries and, above all, in the twentieth century there have been outstanding personalities in all cultural spheres who have been marked by particular courage. Such courage has shown itself particularly in the face of inhuman totalitarian and dictatorial socio-political orders and is frequently also called moral courage. Personalities such as for example Nelson Mandela, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Václav Havel, Aung San Suu Kyi, Eduard Snowden und others were prepared to sacrifice their personal freedom, health and, in some circumstances, even their life when human dignity or human rights were violated.

#### **The motif of courage in the *Study of Man***

The content of the initial course on Waldorf education, *Study of Man*, possesses a unique artistic composition. Dynamic images and movements, astonishing motivic figures, surprising rhythms and reflections are revealed to the artistic eye in this text. These compositional aspects should be closely observed in its study. Thus in the first and last lecture of *Study of Man* the motif of courage briefly appears. But this motif is part of the essential framework for the whole of our educational understanding of the human being.

Courage appears at the start of *Study of Man* (Steiner GA 293, firsts lecture, the part which is not a shorthand note) as one of three purely spiritual qualities: strength, courage and light. All three qualities are connected with the actions of higher beings "at whose behest and under whose mandate each one of us will have to work" and which unite with spiritual communities of people.

The angel gives the individual person the strength they need. If the strength which can

be given by an angel is amplified, courage arises. It is a substance which forms among the people in a collegium when they unite in the spirit. The connection which creates courage arises with the assistance of the ring of archangels over their heads. Enthusiasm and en-COURAGE-ment for the educational work with the pupils and for the social effectiveness and influence on education policy of the school grow out of shared thoughts and experiences, out of conversations and collaboration. Courage comes to appearance here in the social context of a collegial collaboration and school management which is experienced as highly controversial today. Courage is formed as the product of practical and spiritual community building. Where today can we sense such a development of courage in our colleges of teachers?

Courage turns into the substance of a vessel which is blessed with a "drop of the light of time". Courageous deeds attract the interest of the exalted beings of the Archai from the light sphere. Courage is affirmed, strengthened and endowed. The penetrating power of a deed carried by spiritual courage is enhanced. Miracles happen. Situations which rationally appear deadlocked, lost and intractable resolve themselves: "*Courage turns to redeeming power.*" (Steiner GA 267, p. 75)

At the end of *Study of Man* (Steiner GA 293, fourteenth lecture) courage appears again as the middle quality in a total of three: imaginative ability, the courage for truth and a sense of responsibility towards the truth. If the first trinity was elevated to high dimensions of the spiritual world, then this other trinity is transposed into the soul space of the teacher. Courage figures here as a component of soul forces which have been developed through self-education. Courage as a strong force in the character of our heart and mind (intrepidity) is linked here with

the search for truth; that is, with the cognitive thinking life. Its task is to overcome the insecurity which paralyses the will.

The penetrating power of the anthroposophical way of looking at the world is based on experiences which set in when we vigorously study anthroposophy and reflect on it in our hearts. Anthroposophy persistently leads us towards the limits of experience as mediated by the physical senses and moves beyond this threshold to purely spiritual facts for which we no longer find any external supports, such as for example life before birth and after death.

Without a considerable effort of will in our studies and in processing the explanations of anthroposophy in our thinking, we will feel as if we are lost, as if the ground has been pulled from under our feet. The things which we used as guides to that point have lost their validity here. These experiences can also be described as states of fear and anxiety. They can only be overcome through cognitive courage. Such courage arises from an enhanced cognitive power which through inner activity forms a firm existential foundation and security within itself.

A new wakefulness appears as the consequence of such cognitive courage: "*This courage will keep you awake; despondency can send you to sleep by itself. The admonitory voice to take courage, the admonitory voice to be wakeful through courage, that is [...] the version of anthroposophy in the current life of our culture.*" (Steiner GA 233, p. 158). We awaken to new aspects of the world and the human being.

This situation can be compared to the experience when we enter the water and at some point no longer feel solid ground under our feet. We have to start swimming. Existential

fears set in at this point. Am I lost? Will I sink? We have to adapt our movements calmly to the new element of water and then we advance. If we persist, we have a feeling of being refreshed and of the growth of new strength and skills.

### **The courage to do without a headmaster, marks and specialists**

There are innumerable fields in the life of the Waldorf school where courage is absolutely unavoidable. I will mention just three examples which I myself experienced very intensively as a teacher and where I still see ever greater challenges to our courage particularly also at the present time.

As we were establishing Waldorf schools in the Czech Republic after the political transformation of 1989, how often did I hear the words: "A school without a principal?! That can't work!" How often did I hear the words: "Lessons without textbooks and marks?! That's not possible!" How often did I hear the words: "A teacher teaches their class all the main subjects for eight years?! Unthinkable!" That is what the sceptics in public opinion told us. They simply could not imagine that something like this was possible. The Waldorf schools have shown that it works. Today such a sceptical attitude is also spreading within the Waldorf movement.

Rudolf Steiner speaks about the way that in the **management of the school** the reciprocal spiritual activation of those involved replaces "cushions" of external measures. If something is to be put in place of a principal, a special commitment and "full co-responsibility" is required from everyone. Such full co-responsibility in order that the whole thing can thrive requires courage. Are we willing to take on the full responsibility for the school, to maintain the initiative? That is connected with courage. It will not be possi-

ble for a principal to obtain a foothold, to assert themselves, in strong colleges of teachers where these qualities are alive. But where the courage to assume such responsibility wanes, a principalship will sooner or later establish itself.

It is actually an incomprehensible and absurd situation that after centuries of corrosive criticism the practice of **grades and marking** has been able to persist in the state school system. Marks are an element which runs counter to a true education. To give a number to a complex human achievement violates human dignity or is, at best, nonsensical.

But such a practice of giving marks is even more absurd and embarrassing in a Waldorf school. It appears that pupils are indeed given marks in most German Waldorf upper schools. There are also Waldorf teacher training courses which either accept the awarding of marks voluntarily or are forced to do so through accreditation procedures.

A perhaps related example: there are old European "Waldorf countries" where the Waldorf schools today are almost suffocated by regular testing of pupils. Is all of this not evidence of a spreading lack of courage and of fitting in? What we need is a new fearlessness in the battle with the bureaucratic dragon.

There is a period in the learning biography of a person when we have the need to look up to a **respected person**, to be guided by that person in our learning. That is approximately the time between the change of teeth and puberty. During this period it is important for the learner to experience that the teacher is a judge of character, that they are passionately interested in the world and also understand it, and that they have control over

themselves and are continuing to educate themselves.

Such a teacher must have the courage to forgo perfecting their knowledge and specialising in a particular grade or subject in favour of a universal relationship with the human being and the aspects of the world. It is fear which sometimes prevents us from progressing with our class to the higher grades at the end of middle school and to put our faith in the perspectives set out above. The profession of class teacher is based, among other things, on courage.

In the Waldorf school movement, the question of courage is thus simultaneously the

question of being open to higher impulses, inspirations, intuitions. It is a question about the identity of Waldorf schools and is connected with their task in our culture.

Steiner, R. (GA 233): *Die Weltgeschichte in anthroposophischer Beleuchtung und als Grundlage der Erkenntnis des Menschengeistes*. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag. (Published in English as: *World History and the Mysteries in the Light of Anthroposophy*, London: Rudolf Steiner Press.)

Steiner, R. (GA 267): *Seelenübungen. Band I*. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag. (Published in English as: *Soul Exercises*. Great Barrington: SteinerBooks.)

Steiner, R. (GA 293): *Allgemeine Menschenkunde als Grundlage der Pädagogik*. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag. (Published in English as: *Study of Man*. Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press.)

## Impressions of the Meeting of the International Forum (formerly Hague Circle) in the USA

*Nana Göbel / Robert Thomas*

*Translated by Karin Smith*

For people who rarely travel to the US or Canada and who are used to European dimensions, the US seems huge, full of contrast and extremely diverse. This impression was expressed in retrospect by all members at the meeting at the Orange County Waldorf School, California.

Of course, everyone knows that there is a strong polarity between the East coast, with its European traditions, universities, important collections of art, avant-garde art scene, huge cities with their multicultural population, lively downtowns and the West coast, particularly California and its heat, the Caucasian and Asian population, its rural and even desert-like expansion towards the Pacific. As in every learning process, the immediate experience is more important and deeper than any information read beforehand. Information is elaborated and thus becomes true knowledge.

The Waldorf movement in Canada and the US is just as colourful. We would like to illustrate this with a few examples. The small Waldorf school in Montréal, which takes children up to grade six, has been fighting for survival for many years. It is an autonomous school with constant financial problems despite its very good quality of education, its consequent implementation of Waldorf pedagogy and the enormous effort of the teachers. The so-called "independent schools" have a lot of freedom, they can choose the content and implementation of the curriculum, they can employ the teachers with whom they would like to work and are

normally strongly supported by the parents. On the other hand, the charter schools (schools subsidised by the state) are faced with a number of restrictions concerning the curriculum and the employment of teachers but they are able to enrol every child and are not restricted to those children whose parents can afford the tuition fees at independent schools, usually well over \$1000. Both of those systems have their advantages and disadvantages; there is no ideal solution. For decades, American Waldorf schools have always been independent schools. Many representatives of the American Waldorf movement are convinced that only this form is correct and only independent schools can become members of AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools of North America). The charter schools have their own umbrella organisation, the Alliance for Charter Waldorf Schools in North America. With the increasing number of charter schools, the discussion about the "correct" form has also intensified. Only last year it became possible to take the talks between independent and charter schools far enough, so that it is now possible to work towards a closer collaboration between these institutions and further steps are necessary.

The meeting of the International Forum took place South of Los Angeles at the Orange County Waldorf school, a large school by US standards. The school offers classes up to grade 12. The artistic quality of the festival was outstanding and there were many parents and grandparents present. We noted the strong educational quality. Furthermore, the

members of the International Forum noticed how well dressed and polite the students were, that they work with concentration and have a strong inner sense of purpose. Watching the performances of grade 2 to 12 was a real gift and gave us an impression of the lively and modern way Waldorf education is implemented there. Those colleagues take Waldorf education serious which has moved us Europeans very much.

The topic of the class teacher was discussed once more in the meeting of the International Forum. Unfortunately, we have not yet managed to raise awareness of this question in such a way that any new initiatives were started. We urgently need the

support of the national school movements in order to strengthen the importance of this basic principle of Waldorf education. We also need the support of Waldorf teacher training centres in order to encourage colleagues to teach grades one to eight. Further, we have started to discuss the qualities of education for adolescents. Douglas Gerwin and Michael Zech have given us some thought provoking contributions on this issue. It is clear to all those who take a closer look: the quality of upper school education at Waldorf schools has to be strengthened. This is an issue which we will discuss further in our forthcoming meetings.

We are very grateful to our American colleagues for their wonderful hospitality.



## The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America

*Melanie Reiser*

The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America has a total of 166 members: 152 schools and 14 teacher training institutes. Of these, there are 19 schools and 2 teacher training institutes in Canada, 11 schools and 1 teacher training institute in Mexico, and 122 schools and 11 teacher training institutes in the United States. In the past several years, there has been an increase in AWSNA membership of approximately 4 schools each year. In total there are approximately 24,000 students receiving a Waldorf Education in North America. In addition, over the past several years, the total number of children served by AWSNA member schools has increased by several hundred annually since 2008.

With the vastness of our continent, the diversity of our nationalities, and variations in geographic regions, this membership represents a broad spectrum – from young schools like Saltwater Waldorf School in British Columbia, established in 2011 to the Rudolf Steiner School of New York that was established in 1928. Our Association is structured in such a way that our most established, full member schools, which account for 46% of our membership, support those that are still developing their pedagogical practices and organizational processes. Our membership falls into the following categories: initiatives (10), developing (49), candidate (17), and full members (76). This total membership also represents 109 schools with early childhood through the grades (average size 126 students), 35 schools offering early childhood into high school education (average size 291 students), and 8 stand-alone high schools (average size 56 students).

AWSNA has identified eight geographic regions to facilitate regional collaborative work. These regions, from the Northeast to the Southwest of the continent are: Northeast/Quebec, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast/Atlantic, Great Lakes/Ontario, Texas/Mexico/Canada/Southwest Rockies, Northwest/Pacific, Northern California, and Southern California/Hawai'i. The member schools and institutes meet regionally three times a year and once a year as a continent. Most of these regions span large distances, requiring air travel or lengthy drive time in order to meet.

Questions in the various regions include the following.

Most pressing –

- How to recruit, train, and develop Waldorf teachers, qualified administrative staff, and eurythmy teachers
- How to support schools in their development, and along the path to membership, ensuring they are able to fulfill the membership agreements
- How to support new initiatives in the early phases of development, before becoming AWSNA members
- How to adequately fund the school and provide competitive faculty salaries

Additional questions –

- How to deepen anthroposophical study in the school
- How to best implement collaborative and effective governance and administration



- How to facilitate school and Association (AWSNA) communication

As noted in the questions above, two of the most pressing concerns for schools are finding qualified teachers and being able to offer teachers an appropriate wage. From the Association's 14 teacher training institutes, approximately 175–200 students graduate each year. These students do not all become teachers in AWSNA member schools. Thus, despite the healthy number of graduates, there are not enough trained teachers graduating from the institutes to fill the openings. The teacher training institutes are reaching out to schools to strengthen relationships and find additional ways to support the needs of the schools.

Additionally, our institutes are challenged financially and, unlike our schools, rely exclusively on tuition, versus tuition and fundraising. Most institutes are not accredited by an outside agency, so students are not able to access federal loans. AWSNA and the member schools do provide some funding to help

support student loans and grants, but it is not enough to cover the full need. This also affects the ability for students to have extended experiences of student teaching in preparation for their work as a lead teacher.

Despite these challenges, the number of students receiving a Waldorf Education and the number of schools offering a Waldorf Education is increasing on the North American continent. In addition to the information about independent schools described thus far, there is a growing movement of publicly funded schools offering programs inspired by the principles of Public Waldorf Education. Our sister association, the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, has 43 members – public/charter schools in the United States. There are several teacher training institutes that offer training for teachers who wish to work with the principles of Public Waldorf Education.

AWSNA and the member schools and institutes were pleased to welcome and host many IF members in November.

## Impressions from California

*Regula Nilo, for Henri Dahan and James Pewtherer  
translated by James Pewtherer*

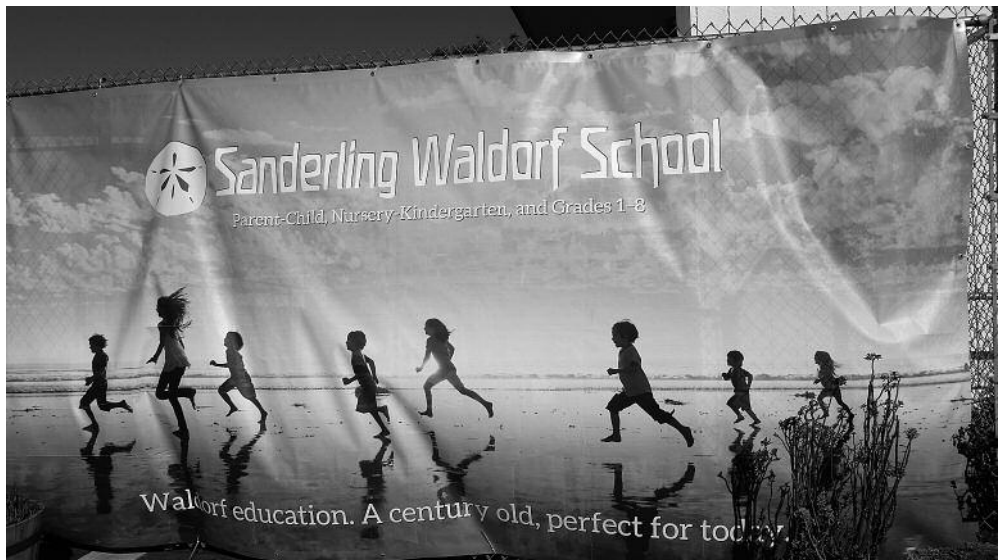
Henri Dahan from France, James Pewtherer from the US, and Regula Nilo from Sweden visited the Sanderling Waldorf School and San Diego Waldorf School on the sunny, southern coast of California. Even in mid-November the sun warmed us through.

We left these visits with the impression that our school movement is both truly global and yet so different depending upon where a school is. As a colleague from Sweden, I was very surprised by what I met in the schools and yet also felt at home. Impressive to me was the warmth and friendliness we received from both teachers and children. The Sanderling School's students and parents are met each day with a large welcome poster: "Waldorf Education – A Century Old and Perfect for Today!" We found this statement was borne out in the various classes, which we

were able to visit briefly. From lovingly guided toddler groups and kindergarteners up to the 8th grade, we saw children who were devotedly and cheerfully busy with their tasks.

My impression was that these children are still more child-like, if I compare them with children growing up in our Nordic conditions. So in my visit to 5th grade eurythmy, I could experience an intense and pleasurable 40 minutes for the children, all without any comments from the pupils as they worked. Neither the boys nor the girls differed in this!

So, too, in the San Diego Waldorf School we were warmly welcomed and guided through school and garden. The bananas, oranges and large butterflies we saw in the school garden may be understood as a metaphor for the



whole school organism that we experienced. We met dedicated and enthusiastic teachers and colleagues. We would have gladly stayed longer to gain deeper insights!

For the last few days of our visit, we took part in a conference in Orange County, south of Los Angeles. With about a hundred people (teachers, administrators, board members, and leaders of the school association, we worked together on questions facing Waldorf schools around the world: finding young teachers, paying for schools, training new teacher. As

part of this gathering, some members of the Hague Circle were asked to share their impressions of America and the children in some of Waldorf schools we visited in different parts of the country. As our North American colleagues listened with great interest, we heard again and again the two themes in particular: 1. How much these children preserved their youthfulness through the grades of the school. And 2., how open and friendly they were to each of us as visitors. Many of us are already thinking that we would like to go back to see even more of this vast land!

## US Impressions

*Tracey Sayn Wittgenstein Piraccini, Steiner Education Australia*

Visiting the east coast New York Rudolf Steiner School and Emerson Waldorf School in Chapel Hill, North Carolina and the west coast Orange County Waldorf School in California were three distinct and unique experiences providing a diverse glimpse of Steiner education in the US.

It was interesting to note similarities and differences, both in schools, administration and management, the curriculum, the students, physical settings and government requirements/funding in comparison to Australia, as Australia often follows trends from the US in education, yet there were marked differences.

To go from the 6 storey inner city New York primary and secondary campuses where space is a premium and Central Park the playground, to Emerson Waldorf School's stunning 56 acre forest filled landscape in North Carolina was an experience in itself. They have 20 acres of farm land and 36 acres for the school site. To note how each school accepts its challenges and works within its own community is a wonderful feature of Waldorf education.

The Emerson Waldorf School enrolls students from kindergarten to Class 12 (as well as nursery classes) with 260 students in total. The Primary Classes from 1 to 8 are fairly full yet the greatest challenge is to maintain students into the high school as the classes are small and yet they are offering a good range of subjects. They have a strong, stable staff with many of the class teachers repeating class-teaching cycles.

I sensed that the teachers, with beautifully presented classrooms and a high standard of

work displayed quite tightly held the primary classes. The arts and handwork curriculum is strong throughout the school, as well as an excellent music program with choral singing, band and orchestra and all students involved with music at some level. The class 5 eurythmy was truly inspiring.

They have finished a whole school master plan and are looking to the future to build a whole school assembly hall and another high school classroom.

One of the most inspiring programs I witnessed were the senior years woodwork and blacksmithing classes where great enthusiasm, will and design were being encouraged and accomplished.

A key difference from Australia is that the US schools do not attract government funding therefore are quite free to do what they like which has its advantages, but there are a few disadvantages. For example, I believe a main challenge for the US Waldorf schools is to pay their teachers a salary that is sustainable for them to be able to retire. I heard of quite a few teachers who wanted to retire but couldn't. Another key difference to Australia is the kind of scrutiny over teaching standards and qualifications. In North Carolina, teachers do not necessarily require teaching qualifications, although most had completed a diploma course from a Steiner Teacher Training Institute. I am not sure what the expectations are in other states.

Emerson Waldorf School have more success than most Australian Steiner schools in keeping class teachers through to the 8<sup>th</sup>

grade. As mentioned previously, many had repeated cycles from 1 to 8! A key similarity from the US to Australia is that it is difficult to find Steiner trained high school teachers. Even though there are high school training opportunities in the US, the training cost can be prohibitive.

It was a wonderful experience and I thank the organisers and my host school, Emerson Wal-

dorf School for their warmth and hospitality. Following this we all met at the Orange County Waldorf School for another inspiring experience and a rich Class 1 to 12 assembly, showcasing students from all classes.

It was interesting to meet with the AWSNA Executive, Leadership Council and some of the Board of Trustees as well as the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education.



## American impressions

*Ellen Fjeld Køttker*

Dear colleagues in USA – first thank you ever so much for receiving the International Forum with such friendliness and interest.

The North-American experience was powerful. So different from Europe, as your country is so vast and grand. Everything is kind of overwhelming, so huge, molded on an altogether larger scale. The willpowers appear accordingly. They manifest themselves robustly through overcoming and dealing with "big" heights, sizes and distances. Then there is one language for all – American/English, whereas Europe has more languages than nations. Schools and universities are free in most European countries. Europeans see university as granted. I strongly experienced a general pride and adoration for schools, colleges or universities, and perhaps some ambition as well?

It is difficult to generalize the differences as Europe includes many cultures. But if I really should oversimplify I would say that the most striking dissimilarities are; the "loose regulation" of gun ownership, death penalty (which in most European countries was left long ago), the social security system and the focus on sports.

I visited Southcentral New Hampshire with three colleagues: Michael Zech, Dušan Pleštil and Tomáš Zdražil. We were able to stop at *Pine Hill Waldorf School* (PreK-8) and *High Mowing School* (9-12) in Wilton. Both schools are located at the same campus, situated at a beautiful hilltop with a fantastic view over a valley. High Mowing School is the only Waldorf boarding school in North America, but open also to day students. They offer a whole-

hearted Waldorf high school program of arts-permeated academics within a small and friendly school community. In Keene we went to see *Monadnock* (PreK-12), one school in three campuses divided between the Nursery-Kindergarten, the Elementary school and the High School program.

Everywhere we went I found enthusiastic Waldorf pedagogical work and healthy school activities. In all the schools we visited we met dedicated teachers and quite a few who were class teachers for the third or fourth time around.

The schools provide for their pupils/students aesthetically, beautiful environments serving as a pedagogical tool. I sensed a solid application of the Waldorf curriculum and a deep respect for children. The Waldorf Schools we visited clearly represented strong visions of how to improve human society by helping children recognize their potential as creative and whole persons. Through observation and conversations with teachers I experienced how the children are viewed as active participants in their own development, toward growth and learning. Impressive – indeed! The children/students were also very polite. The high school students were proud of their schools. Yes, I'm always amazed at how children flourish in Waldorf schools!

But I did experience however, that the young people we encountered, had quite a protected life created by school and parents, especially at high school level. The students I met had a strongly regulated and controlled life, with long schooldays, sports, homework and hardly any opportunities to use public

transportation, for example. And I ask – with this lifestyle, do they get enough space for their own individual development as young adventurous persons?

In Keene, the meeting with *Antioch University New England* colleagues also contributed to an interesting conversation connected to teacher training aspects. The Waldorf Teacher Training Program at Antioch University New England works through a combination of group coursework, independent study, and practical experience. They have an extensive and intensive summer program as well. The main features are in-depth study of the Waldorf curriculum and the theoretical foundations of Waldorf education. Here again we could recognize common issues and connect through global challenges.

Finally in Keene we were able to appreciate *the Sophia's Hearth Family Center*.

The center is a place for families with young children, from infant care to age six. They support families through direct service programs and provide quality care for families and young children. In addition they are responsible for a professional Waldorf development program for educators in early childhood education.

Waldorf Education is truly global – not only in scope but in its approach. I am grateful for the experiences that Waldorf schools, teacher seminars and early childhood programs in different parts of the world, have the same guiding vision: to develop individuals, who engage with the world, enjoy life and commit themselves to lifelong learning.

Our last evening in Keene was a celebration of collegial collaboration and worldwide friendship. Karine Munk and Torin Finser arranged a social evening for mutual exchange with many Waldorf friends from the Wilton/Keene area.

I am sincerely grateful for the generosity of the Waldorf School movement in North-America for making this tour possible for the International Forum/Haager Kreis. Allowing us to maintain and establish our links across "the pond" as a Waldorf community as well as create new important professional links. The International Forum meeting in America gave new understanding of the Waldorf impulse worldwide.

I would like to thank all who extended so much warm hospitality.

## Conference in Orange County

*James Pewtherer*

For the last few days of our visit, we took part in a conference in Orange County, south of Los Angeles. With about a hundred people (teachers, administrators, board members, and leaders of the school association, we worked together on questions facing Waldorf schools around the world: finding young teachers, paying for schools, training new teacher. As part of this gathering, some members of the International Forum were asked to share their impressions of America and the

children in some of Waldorf schools we visited in different parts of the country. As our North American colleagues listened with great interest, we heard again and again the two themes in particular: 1. How much these children preserved their youthfulness through the grades of the school. And 2., how open and friendly they were to each of us as visitors. Many of us are already thinking that we would like to go back to see even more of this vast land!





## Agenda

2016

February 19 – 21

Practical Meditative Work  
(only in German)

March 28 – April 2

10<sup>th</sup> World Teachers' Conference  
(English, Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese and  
Russian or Hungarian Language)

May 20 – 22

Conference for Religion Teachers  
(German and English)